

# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Albert Balagso

**SUBJECT:** 2008 GRAFFITI SURVEY  
REPORT

**DATE:** May 21, 2008

Approved

Date 05/21/2008

During the discussion of the Neighborhood Services CSA Operating Budget, it was requested that the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services re-issue the information memo on Graffiti that was provided earlier this year. Per that request, enclosed please find a copy of the original memo dated February 08, 2008 which transmits the results of the 2008 graffiti survey. Please note that since the report was originally issued, staff has been working collaboratively with its partners to develop new strategies to eradicate graffiti. The following is a short summary of those accomplishments:

- **Juvenile Offenders Referral Program Restored** - Each weekend 10-20 youth are being referred to the Anti-Graffiti program to perform 24 hours of community service. An agreement with the County Department of Probation to refer ward youth (under court order to be supervised by the County Department of Probation) has been drafted and is currently being processed for final execution.
- **Accountability Increased** - Juvenile offenders are now being required to attend a 90 minute tag class. The purpose of this class is to create greater awareness of the consequences associated with graffiti tagging. The first tag class was held on May 13, 2008.
- **Resources Augmented** - An agreement with the County Department of Correction (DOC) for the use of alternate work crews to perform pro-active graffiti eradication on a weekly basis is currently in process. These crews will focus on the 100 mile routes that have been identified as high traffic areas for graffiti. It is anticipated that the agreement will be fully executed over the next several weeks.
- **Improved Outreach** - As a result of a concerted public outreach effort, calls to the graffiti hotline have increased significantly. There were approximately 700 calls to the hotline in January 2008. Calls to the hotline increased to over 1,000 in the month of March.

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- **Enhanced Use of Technology** - Students from San Jose State University's Management Information Systems (MIS) Honors Program are working with City staff to develop a new technology tool that will allow for real-time data collection using personal digital assistant devices (PDA). By optimizing routes between work orders, these devices will shorten travel time, allow field staff to remotely access and update the work order database and provide cameras to document the graffiti in the event that enforcement action is needed. These PDAs will be compatible with the database used by the Police Department and are currently being field tested. It is anticipated that these devices will greatly enhance operational efficiencies - allowing field staff to focus more of their time on actual eradication efforts.
- **Better Coordination** - City staff has coordinated with City Council offices' outreach efforts to recruit new volunteers for our quarterly Anti-Graffiti cleanups. Additionally, an inter-departmental team has continued to meet to address issues of coordination and improved tracking. These meetings provide an opportunity to review current processes as well as to develop pro-active, coordinated responses to emerging issues such as the incidents of graffiti on high-rise buildings.
- **Funding Shift** - One of the greatest challenges for the Anti-Graffiti program has been the restrictions associated with Community Development Block Grant Funding (CDBG). This year, staff was notified that the program would no longer be eligible for CDBG in 2008-2009. This challenge provided an opportunity to identify an alternative funding strategy. As such, the 2008-2009 Proposed Operating Budget recommends shifting funding for the program to the General Fund. This shift will greatly expand the flexibility in allocating staff resources city-wide and lower the administrative burden associated with CDBG documentation.

While we continue to experience a high level of tagging, we are confident that these efforts will begin to make a difference in the coming months. PRNS will continue to keep the Council informed of its anti-graffiti efforts through reports to the Neighborhood Services & Education Committee.



Albert Balagso

Director

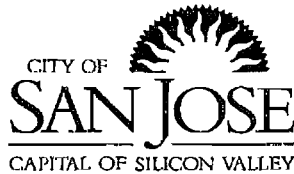
Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood  
Services

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## Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Albert Balagso

**SUBJECT:** 2008 GRAFFITI SURVEY

**DATE:** February 8, 2008

Approved

Date

2/12/08

### INFORMATION

#### BACKGROUND

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) conducted its first annual City-wide survey of graffiti tags in January 1999. Since that time, a survey has been conducted each year in an effort to evaluate the level of activity relative to the baseline established in 1999.

The purpose of this memorandum is to transmit the results of the 2008 graffiti survey.

#### ANALYSIS

The 1999 survey established a baseline of 71,541 tags<sup>1</sup>. Since that initial survey, the number of tags identified by PRNS' Anti-Graffiti and Litter Program (AGLP) has steadily declined. The following chart summarizes this activity:

Year	Total Tags	Year	Total Tags
1999	71,541	2004	3,913
2000	35,744	2005	2,035
2001	10,498	2006	129
2002	5,612	2007	2,594
2003	3,827		

The success of the program has been due, in large part, to the effective coordination between City departments, volunteers and external partners such as VTA, County Roads and Airport, Probation, Cal Trans and the Santa Clara Valley Water District.

<sup>1</sup> Only markings or "tags" that were visible from streets were counted. It is important to note that tags on school properties, inside buildings, public restrooms and behind shopping centers and tags in alleys were not counted.

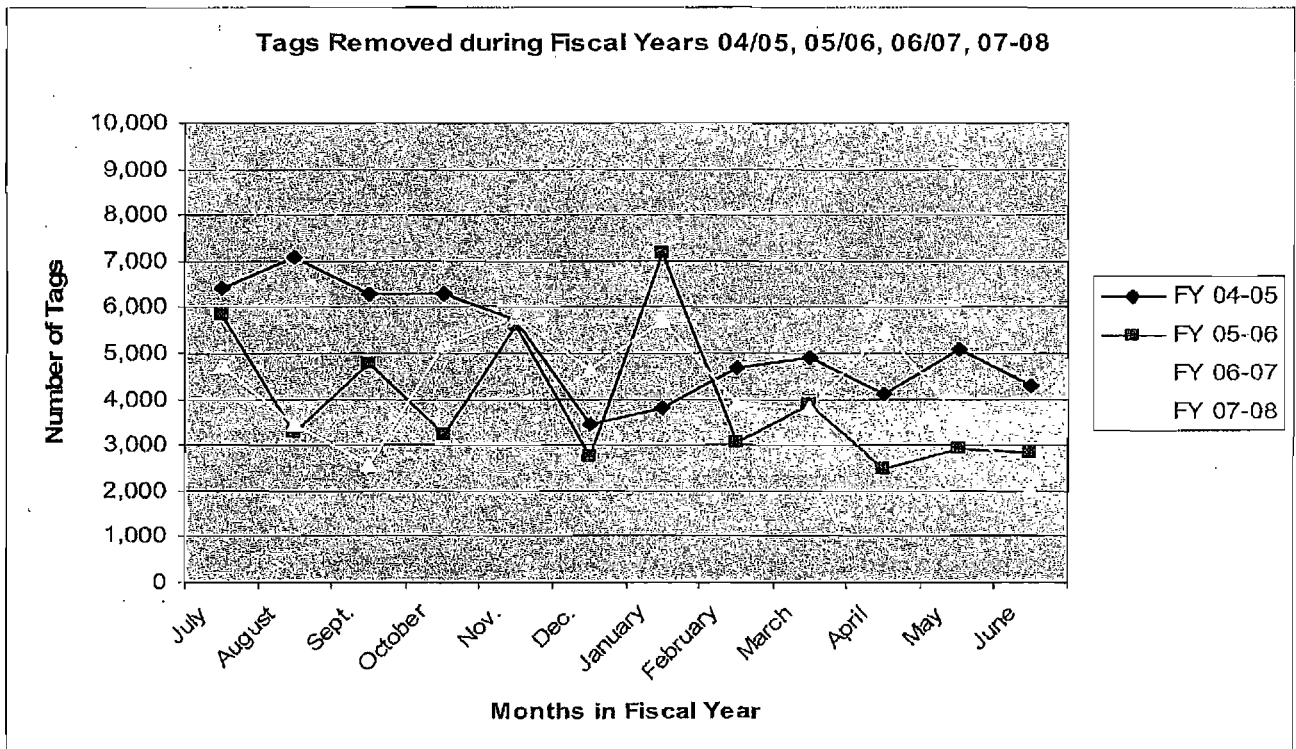
Over the years, this collaboration has enabled the City to ensure a broad continuum of services including community outreach, eradication and enforcement. City resources have been leveraged by the recruitment of over 3,000 community volunteers, the use of sentencing alternative programs and contract services in specific areas of the City (i.e., the downtown and Neighborhood Business Districts).

The 2008 survey results indicate that, despite these efforts, the City has experienced a significant increase in the level of graffiti activity. The most recent survey, conducted the third week of January 2008, identified over 13,900 tags.

An initial review of tags abated during the first 6 months of this fiscal year compared to the same time period last year indicates that staff removed almost 61% more tags this year.

The following chart provides a historical overview of the tags abated by PRNS over the past four years.

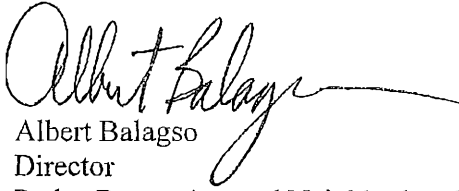
YEAR	TAGS ABATED (July – December)	ANNUAL TOTAL	SQUARE FT. REMOVED (July – December)	ANNUAL TOTAL
2007-08	43,159		244,380*	
2006-07	26,455	50,902	292,385	700,396
2005-06	25,489	47,863	173,915	400,268
2004-05	35,167	62,076	188,777	374,972



Due to the near doubling in the number of graffiti tags abated this year, it is clear that the overall volume of graffiti tags has increased so significantly that additional actions are necessary.

Staff is currently reviewing the statistics and meeting with stakeholders to identify factors that may have led to this increase. A new trend that has been identified is the tagging of high rise buildings in the downtown. This is problematic in that removal of this type of graffiti is the responsibility of the property owner. As a result, City staff must work with the Downtown Association and property owners to develop a more streamlined approach to graffiti removal. This effort is already underway and a community education plan will be implemented within the next 60 days.

A full report on the status of the graffiti program and actions that can be taken to address the recent increase in activity will be presented to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee at its March 10, 2008 meeting. In the interim, staff is currently organizing a City-wide clean up effort that will take place the week of February 25, 2008. If there are particular areas of concern, please do not hesitate to call the 24-hour graffiti hotline at 408.277.2758.

  
Albert Balagso  
Director  
Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood  
Services